IDEAS LABS

Leveraging Technology to Pivot Your Business

Industry Topic Specialist

Name: David Gonella
Position: Executive Director
Company: Salmon Arm ROOTSandBLUES Festival
Location: Salmon Arm, BC
davidg@rootsandblues.ca

Specialist Highlights

Salmon Arm ROOTSandBLUES Festival (SARBF) pivoted their annual in person event to online and reframed the focus in a way that presented and supported the region as a tourism destination.

Lessons learned include:

- Save money and time by using 'off the shelf' software. Don't reinvent the wheel and develop from scratch unless there are no other options.
- Adapt current assets to create new online engagement opportunities; SARBF repurposed archival recordings in combination with new pre-recorded shows that were edited together for presentation on the festival weekend).
- The virtual festival offered access to new customers. SARBF increased their newsletter subscribers by 45% and found some new customers prefer a virtual environment for large events (i.e., to avoid crowds or adverse weather conditions).
- Using high quality video assets from tourism partners added to the professional quality of the event and opened the doors to new sponsorship opportunities.
- Expect to train staff/contractors to fill roles requiring technology skills.

Discussion Ideas & Tips

A range of ideas from industry pertaining to how and why businesses can and should leverage technology to pivot their business and develop new revenue streams were generated through Ideas Labs held with 17 tourism professionals as of Nov 30, 2020.

Key Takeaway

Leveraging technology to bring new experiences to market has resulted in organizations finding and developing new audiences, creating new partnerships and using their business assets differently.

Rationale for adopting new technology now

- The community has a need to see that businesses are open – if unable to offer in-person experiences offering a digitally based experience can provide customers and the broader community with a sense of hope and excitement.
- A new and innovative approach can be invigorating for staff, especially if things have run the same way for years.
- Digital experiences are likely to continue as part of the overall mix of experiences offered, developing them now provides operators with an opportunity to learn while consumer expectations are more understanding.
- If you have been doing things the same way for years and resisting change because your customers like things the way they are, this is a great time to implement changes, as your customers are likely to be more open to, and understanding of, new approaches.

Approaches taken to leveraging technology

Accommodation providers are:
- Using contactless check-in/out experiences to deliver greater guest protection.
- Providing digital guest books to answer common questions vs. traditional face-to-face services.
- Gathering and leveraging visitor data to provide new loyalty and rebooking incentives.

Festival & events organizers are:

- Creating virtual concerts and streaming video packages they can sell at varying price points.

Museums and others giving tours are:

- Using online booking tools to sell and schedule small bubble tours.
- Using specialized software to better communicate and engage with members/donors.

Common approaches across sectors included:

- Examining existing experiences and assets to determine how they can be repurposed to create new, online content and experiences for your audience(s).
- Developing new partnerships – as businesses explore new tech-based and virtual offers they are discovering that different partnerships are required, and beneficial, to optimize opportunities.
- Making small adaptations this year, while conducting the research required for more significant and lasting changes in the future.
- Identifying data and assets outside the organization that are available for use such as those from community and regional DMOs and Destination BC.

Technology Tips

- Your archives can provide a wealth of photographic, video, audio and written assets that can be brought to life in new ways online.
- When creating new online experiences, ensure that the digital experience is aligned with your brand.
- Introducing new technology often brings new HR considerations – new people and skills may be required along with an investment in training to learn new skills.
- Discuss potential solutions and opportunities with your current platform/technology provider – there may already be an off-the shelf, or easily adapted, solution.
- Connecting with sector associations may be a shortcut when researching sector related technology solutions. For example, campgrounds may want to approach the BC Lodging & Campground Association for input to a reservations system.
- When determining a web platform, answer three questions: Is the host platform easy to work with? What is your business' capacity for self-learning? What specific capabilities are needed and what look and feel is desired? Answers will help you decide on a web platform and theme/template. There is no need to change platforms if the one you have meets your needs. Some of the platforms for ecommerce include Wix, Square, Squarespace, Shopify and WordPress.
- To facilitate Search Engine Optimization (SEO), use subdirectories rather than subdomains when developing a website.
- Decisions to implement digital technology may require trade-offs between quality, time and money; you can generally have two but not all three.

Additional Helpful Links

Salmon Arm ROOTSandBLUES festival: YouTube Channel

SARBF used the following tools: a variety of Adobe tools, Adobe Premier for video editing, Acrobat Adobe for file sharing to ensure formatting not lost in transit; Avid Pro Tools for sound editing; Zoom for video conferencing; Google Drive for file editing and sharing; WordPress for the website and Black Press media as the event presentation platform.

Lynda.com part of LinkedIn learning is a great site for learning new technology.

The BC Tourism Resiliency Network can be helpful in connecting you with an advisory resource to help address your specific technology issues and needs.

Touch Stay for digital guest books and Hostfully for digital guidebooks.